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ABSTRACT

Important insights about how to develop human potential are being discovered these days in a field called transpersonal psychology. This new field is called the fourth force in psychology because like psychoanalysis, behaviorism, and humanistic psychology before it, it is on the cutting edge of what it means to be fully human. It seeks to develop a comprehensive understanding of human nature which also takes into account the dynamic role of motivation and the human spirit in the equation of excellence, well-being, and dynamic living. Transpersonal psychology seeks to understand how imagination, inspiration, intuition, creativity, and insight operate. These human resources provide what are called higher states of awareness because they help people view their lives from a higher point of view; clarify their values; strengthen, regenerate and renew themselves at the deepest levels; touch and empower the human spirit; and help them experience a sense of the unity which underlies all creation. Transpersonal psychology seeks to learn how to develop these human resources because they play such an important role in personal, professional, and communal lives. (ABL)

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PSYCHOSYNTHESIS
TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY

TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY: EXPLORING THE FRONTIERS IN HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT*

BACKGROUND

Important insights about how to develop human potential are being discovered these days in a field called Transpersonal Psychology. This new field is called the 4th Force in Psychology because, like Psychoanalysis, Behaviorism and Humanistic Psychology before it, Transpersonal Psychology is on the cutting edge of research into what it means to be fully human. Much is already known about how the mind, emotions, and behavioral patterns develop, interact, and affect the personality. Transpersonal Psychology attempts to integrate these findings and go one step further. It seeks to develop a comprehensive understanding of human nature which also takes into account the dynamic role of motivation and the human spirit in the equation of excellence, well-being and dynamic living.

HIGHER STATES OF AWARENESS

In general, Transpersonal Psychology seeks to understand how imagination, inspiration, intuition, creativity, and insight operate. These human resources provide us with what are called higher states of awareness because they help us see our lives from a higher point of view; clarify our values; help us find a sense of the meaning, purpose and direction of our lives; strengthen, regenerate and renew us at the deepest levels; touch and empower the human spirit; and help us experience a sense of the unity which underlies all creation. Transpersonal Psychology seeks to learn how to develop these human resources because they play such an important role in our personal, professional, and communal lives.

In specific, Transpersonal Psychology can facilitate the process of personal growth and professional development through the careful use of specific methods and techniques for developing human potential. Let's look at the derivation of the word "Transpersonal", to better understand what this branch of Psychology is all about.

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"TRANS-PERSONAL"

In Latin, persona means "mask". In ancient Rome, the persona was the mask which actors wore on stage to identify which roles they were playing for the audience. The English word "personality" takes its root from this Latin word, and refers to the outer facade we present to others. In Latin, trans means "on the other side of", as implied in the words transatlantic or transcontinental; or "above and beyond", as implied in the concept--to transcend.

Our personality is the mask we wear in front of others, and is a patterned set of values, attitudes, roles and behaviors with which we interact in the world. Individuals and organizations have personalities. But the personality does not account for everything about us. We have inner lives as well. Unfortunately, much of the time we are only slightly aware of our inner lives, uneducated and untrained as we are to perceive, explore, or develop the depths within us. There are powerful energies, talents and potentials within individuals and groups which are blocked, buried, suppressed or simply unknown, which must be tapped if we are to fully develop our human resources and be all that we can be in life.

Trans-personal Psychology helps us: "get above or beyond" our personalities so we can see them clearly, understand their origins and dynamics, integrate their functions, and transform them when possible; look "on the other side of" our blocks and barriers, to discover what is hidden or unknown within; develop new human resources; and consciously play roles in life that bring into the world our best talents and abilities.

METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

Throughout time, and in every culture, people have created and employed a variety of methods and techniques to expand awareness; explore, integrate and heal the unconscious; develop human potential; and enjoy life to the fullest. Such methods include art, dance, music, rituals, ceremonies, initiations, rites of passage, prayer, fasting, solitude, trance states and quests into nature. Transpersonal Psychology studies these methods to understand their relevance, application and effect. Other techniques being studied for their capacity to develop human potential include relaxation methods, reflective writing, visualization, guided imagery and the use of symbols, meditation, yoga, hypnosis, breathing techniques, role playing, mime and psychodrama.

These and other methods can heighten awareness, provoke powerful inner experience, release repressed energy, and facilitate positive growth when wisely utilized in procedures which must include expert guidance, adequate preparation, and appropriate integration. Transpersonal Psychology brings scientific inquiry to these methods in order to understand how to apply them, what they reveal about the depths of human nature, and what the limits truly are to our capacity for living caring, rewarding, and productive lives.

DANGERS

What are the potential dangers in the application of new methods and techniques for developiong human resources? An analogy might be found in the use of explosives. If dynamite is unwisely utilized, people can get hurt and property can be damaged. But used correctly, dynamite can literally move mountains, uncover gems and veins of precious metals, break up log jams, clear land, help build roads. This is true about the use of cutting edge methods for developing human resources. Two principle concerns are: 1), destablizing present operational patterns too quickly by confronting and/or releasing repressed energy; and 2), a lack of adequate integration of the material that gets uncovered.

There is a great reluctance to invest in the development of human resources in the workplace because it is such a delicate undertaking. Everyone is wired a little differently, has unique sensitivities and values which must be respected. Personal and/or organizational issues can be identified in a rapid and direct way through processes of deep relaxation, reflective writing, visualization, symbolic drawing, psychodrama, etc., or just plain honest dialogue, but unless the individual or organization is committed to dealing squarely with their emerging issues and solving identified problems, trust, interpersonal relations, and morale can be damaged along the way.

On the other hand, it takes imagination, intuition, inspiration, creativity and insight for an individual to grow personally or professionally; for a working group to develop cooperation, good communications or the entrepreneurial spirit; for an organization to see the real world clearly, set realistic goals, honor their employees adequately, keep productivity high, remain competetive in the marketplace, turn a profit, and be successful.

The practicioner of Transpersonal Psychology needs to have competence and compassion to help individuals or organizations face their problems, confront their fears, develop their true potential, evolve and grow. The practicioner must have an intuitive sense of what to work on, in what depth, with what timing and with what tools; understand the process of integration which must occur with whatever is uncovered or revealed; and accept the slow and difficult pace of personal and organizational transformation.

These skills only come from long and arduous training; an intense personal commitment to the use of these tools in one's own personal and professional life; a willingness to take risks and yet pay scrupulous attention to the feedback; and a genuine love of people. These same qualities are required by managers and supervisors who wish to help their organizations achieve true excellence.

APPLICATION

Transpersonal Psychology, about 25 years old, can have a tremendous impact in many areas of human endeavor because of its impact on the human spirit and its capacity to help develop human resources. Its relevance is only beginning to be appreciated.

In therapy, Transpersonal Psychology helps clients strengthen their sense of worth, clarify their issues of concern, identify the specific inner resources needed to address their problems, and accomplish a healing process. This is done in one-to-one sessions, in group therapy, and in personal growth workshops of many kinds.

In business, Transpersonal Psychology addresses the issues of personal productivity, job satisfaction and organizational effectiveness. It offers carefully designed and state-of-the-art team building sessions, stress management programs, communication workshops, strategic planning, managerial and supervisory training, leadership development, and executive retreats.

In the arts, Transpersonal Psychology is concerned with the creative process. It helps artists tap inspiration, hear their inner muses, develop their technique and express their creative impulses in more effective ways. In diplomacy, it helps bridge the gap between nations by helping people identify their common values and honor their cultural differences.

In education, Transpersonal Psychology employs accelerated learning processes to help people identify their blocks to education, focus and concentrate. In religion, it helps people use new techniques for exploring spirituality; helps them focus on, and better understand, their own religious values, doctrines and traditions; and strengthens their sense of community.

Important discoveries are being made these days about the nature of consciousness and the process of developing human resources, the consequences of which are just beginning to be felt. Transpersonal Psychology is in the vanguard of this work, blazing new trails in our understanding of what it means to be fully human.

AUTHOR

Michael H. Brown, M.A., is a Human Resources Consultant living in Springfield, Virginia. He began exploring Transpersonal Psychology with four years in Catholic Seminary (1967-71). Michael earned a B.A. in Psychology from the University of Maryland (1971), and an M.A. in Psychology from Sonoma State University in California (1978). Michael spent two years associated with the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center, training in the therapeutic and abuse potential of psychoactive substances (1972-4). Michael trained four years in Psychosynthesis in Canada and California (1974-78), and was on the training staff of the Canadian Institute of Psychosynthesis in Montreal.

Michael has been conducting personal growth and professional training programs for 12 years. He is the author of 15 articles on new methods for developing human resources. Michael has taught courses at American University, the University of New York at New Paltz, Piedmont Virginia Community College, and other institutions of higher education. He offers programs such as stress management, team building, staff development, strategic planning, managerial and super-

visory training, enhancing creativity in the workplace, and shortcuts to excellence to organizations such as the USDA-Forest Service; the Government of the District of Columbia; Office of the Secretary of Navy; Office of Personnel Management; the University of Idaho; and Edison Electric Institute.

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